WASHINGTON-Congressman Spencer Bachus, in response to Tuesday's "test" by the TSA at Birmingham International Airport, has sent a letter to Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge requesting an explanation. The airport was shut down for over 2 hours, delaying 300 passengers and 13 flights. The TSA requires that airport personnel be notified of inspections. For some reason, this did not happen in Birmingham.

"Why?" asked Congressman Bachus.

Attached below is a copy of the letter sent to Tom Ridge.

March 13, 2003

Via Facsimile (202-282-8404)

The Honorable Tom Ridge

Secretary of Homeland Security

Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On Tuesday March 11, 2003 a test conducted by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) led to a security breach at the Birmingham International Airport.   T his failure led to the evacuation of both terminals and widespread concern among the traveling public, airport personnel and citizens of Birmingham in general.

As a Member of the Aviation Subcommittee, there are several questions that I have regarding this failure that I request you to address.

First, the unidentified persons without proper identification were allowed to leave the premises without being detained.   Can you explain how this happened and what current procedures can be adapted to ensure that this does not happen again?

Second, and more importantly, the <u>test</u> was allowed to progress to a level that caused evacuation of both airport terminals, the delaying of incoming flights, and missed connections by the traveling public. Would it not have been prudent to have senior TSA managers monitoring this test on site to terminate it in the event it disrupted the operations of the airport?

Third, my office contacted the TSA Legislative Affairs Office on Wednesday March 12, 2003 at approximately 11:00 A.M. to inquire about the details of the incident.   At that time, the TSA Legislative Affairs Office did not have any information regarding the security breach. Twenty-four hours later, my office has not been contacted by TSA to let us know that this alleged security breach was only a test.

Is there a procedure in place to promptly return an inquiry from a Congressional Office?

And finally, will TSA reimburse the costs occurred by the airlines due to the failure to conclude the test in a timely manner.

The testing of TSA employees is essential in maintaining a safe and efficient air travel system. As a frequent air traveler, I understand the importance of increased security, nonetheless, procedures should be in place to test employees without having to disrupt an already beleaguered airline industry and a weary flying public.

Sincerely,

Spencer Bachus

Member of Congress

STB:gc

cc: Chairman John Mica

Aviation Subcommittee

Admiral James Loy, Director

Transportation Security Administration